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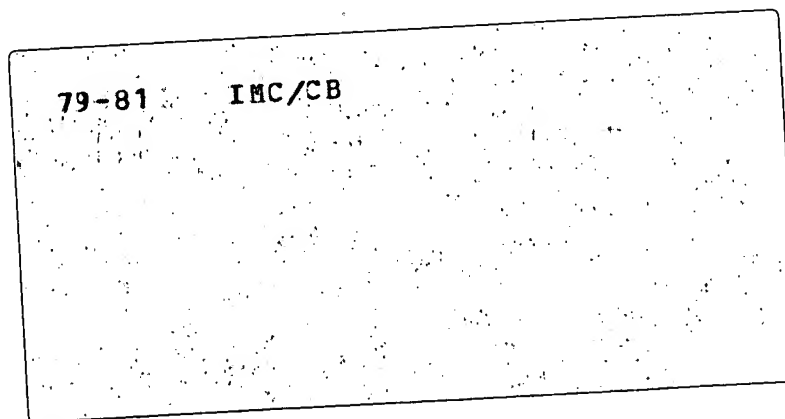
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Afghanistan Situation Report

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State Dept. review completed

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AFGHANISTAN SITUATION REPORT

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Rival groups of Shiites have agreed to end their disputes, but their fragile truce is unlikely to aid the resistance effort.

KHALQI NAMED CHIEF OF STAFF

Maj. Gen. Shahnawaz Tanai recently was named Chief of the General Staff of the Afghan armed forces, probably to improve morale among Khalqi officers.

FOOD SHORTAGES IN THE EAST

Some spot shortages of food have occurred in the eastern provinces, but widespread shortages in the immediate future are unlikely.

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CHINA-USSR: THE AFGHANISTAN OBSTACLE TO BETTER RELATIONS

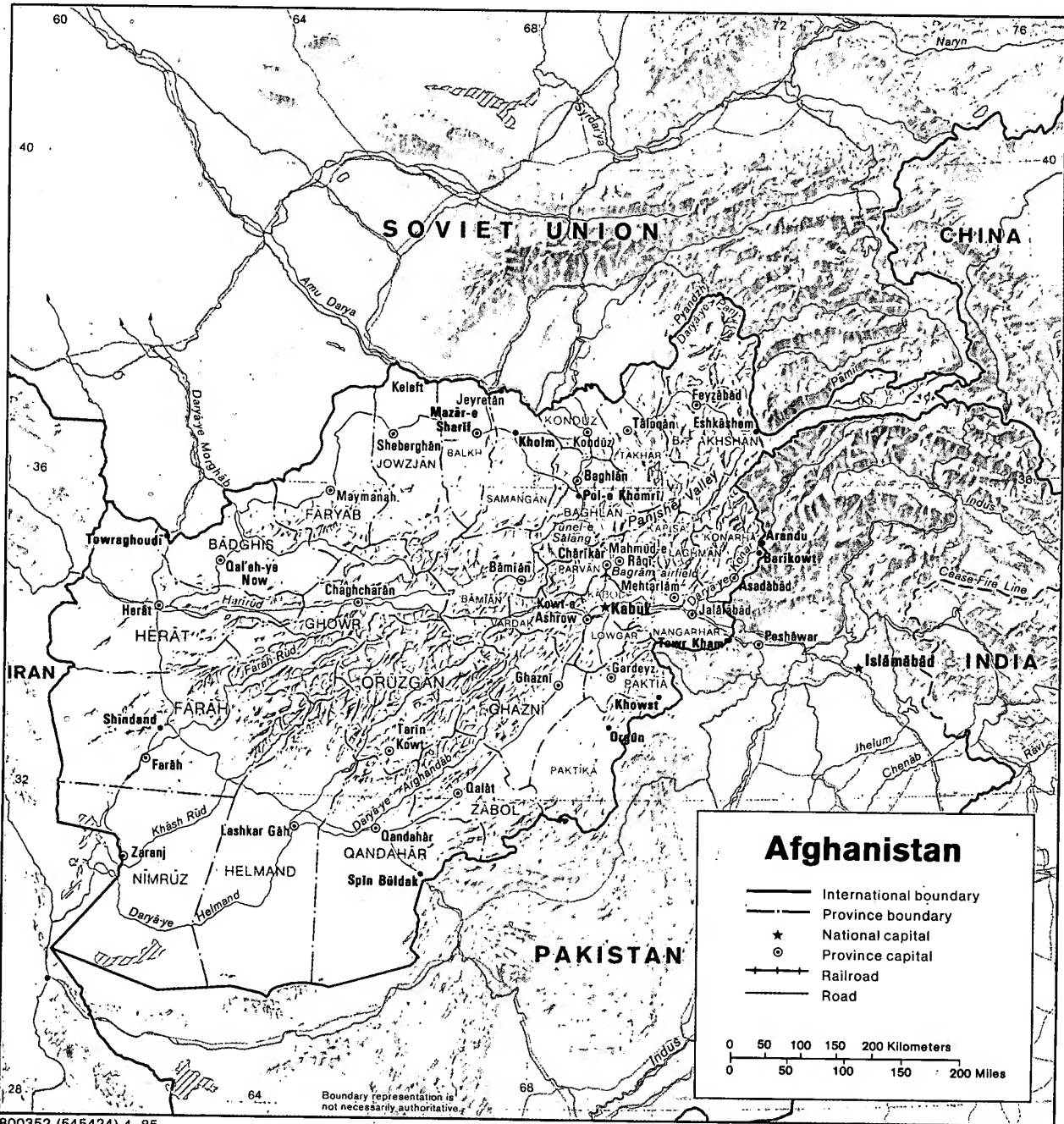
China has moderated its rhetoric on the Afghanistan issue in recent months to improve relations with the USSR, but the change represents no softening of Chinese support for the Afghan insurgents or Pakistan.

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COOPERATION AMONG SHIITE INSURGENTS

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Ten rival groups of Afghan Shiites in the Hazarehjat have agreed to end their disputes, promote an Iranian-style revolution, and oust the Soviets and the Kabul regime, according to press reports. The truce was reportedly engineered by Iran and binds all the main Shiite groups in the Hazarehjat except the Shura-Inqilab-i-Itifaq-i-Islami, which has been supported by local landowners rather than by Iran.

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Comment: Tehran's press for unity among the Shiite groups began in earnest in March, probably from fear of growing Sunni influence, since the Peshawar resistance leaders--all Sunnis--were moving at that time to form a new alliance. The truce probably will prove fragile because of competing local interests. Even if it holds, it is unlikely to affect the overall effort to expel the Soviets and oust the Kabul regime. Eight of the 10 Shiite groups involved are local and radical and have had little impact on the fighting. The two larger groups, Nasr and the Sepah-i Pasdaran, which follow Khomeini, have concentrated almost exclusively on gaining control of the Hazarehjat. They have long had the upper hand against Shura, which was driven out of most of the Hazarehjat in 1984 and has been generally inactive. Iranian efforts to aid the Afghan insurgency have consisted primarily of support to groups loyal to Khomeini.

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KHALQI NAMED CHIEF OF STAFF

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Major General Shahnawaz Tanai recently has been promoted from commander of the Afghan Army's I (Central) Corps to Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces. He will oversee the operations of the army and of 17 directorates within the Ministry of National Defense. A young military officer with a reputation for being highly political, Tanai has been a member of the PDPA Central Committee since July 1983. He was the only Khalqi, other than Defense Minister Nazar Mohammad and Interior Minister Gulabzoi, raised to major general this April in a round of promotions that largely favored the Parchamis. Tanai commanded the 8th Division, headquartered near Kabul, prior to taking over I Corps in

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late 1982. [REDACTED]

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Comment: Tanai's appointment may be part of the Soviets' continuing effort to placate Khalqis, who dominate the officer ranks of the Afghan military. Given the pervasive Soviet role in the war and the chronic low morale in the Afghan forces, it is unlikely that this or other Afghan personnel moves will greatly affect the war. [REDACTED]

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FOOD SHORTAGES IN THE EAST [REDACTED]

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Shortages of wheat, rice, onions, potatoes, kerosene, and cooking oil are occurring in the eastern provinces of Afghanistan. [REDACTED] Insurgents in Baglan and Lowgar Provinces are not permitting the shipment of grain out of the provinces. The shortages have resulted from the deterioration of irrigation systems and the disruption of distribution systems. [REDACTED]

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Comment: By preventing the shipment of grain from areas they control, the insurgents probably hope to ensure adequate food supplies and thus keep their civilian supporters from migrating. Irrigation and transportation problems and manpower shortages have periodically produced spot shortages of food in Afghanistan. While spot shortages will probably continue to appear, widespread food shortages in the immediate future are unlikely. [REDACTED]

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-- US Embassy sources report that insurgents in the Ghazni and Paghman areas have begun to cooperate closely and that the Paghman groups have obtained new supplies of weaponry and large numbers of reinforcements. [REDACTED]

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PERSPECTIVE**CHINA-USSR: THE AFGHANISTAN OBSTACLE TO BETTER RELATIONS**

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China has moderated its rhetoric on the Afghanistan issue over the past few months as part of its efforts to improve relations with the Soviet Union. In our view, the tempering is largely tactical and represents no softening of Chinese support for the Afghan insurgents or Pakistan. Indeed, Beijing would like nothing better than to see the Soviets remain bogged down indefinitely in Afghanistan. China also remains very sensitive to Soviet attempts to gain leverage over Pakistan to halt the flow of arms to the resistance and to accept the legitimacy of the regime in Kabul. As a consequence, we believe China will continue to keep its own official relations with Kabul to a minimum and continue to supply and train Afghan insurgents.

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Afghanistan As an Obstacle

Afghanistan has slipped over the past few years from ostensibly the most to the least important [redacted] blocking normalization of Sino-Soviet relations, judging from Chinese [redacted] treatment of these issues.

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In part this reflects a decline in Chinese concern since 1981 that the Soviet presence in Afghanistan poses a direct security threat to China. It also reflects the corresponding increase in Chinese concern about the Soviet military presence in Vietnam and especially at Cam Ranh Bay.

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The Chinese have played down all three obstacles since last December in an effort to restore some momentum to stalled Sino-Soviet relations. They were very restrained in their response to the Vietnamese offensive against the Cambodian resistance camps and silent

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on the fifth anniversary of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan because they were courting the visiting group Soviet First Deputy Premier Arkhipov at the time. [REDACTED]

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Chinese and Soviet media clashed briefly in February and early March over the Soviet publication of an Afghan protest note accusing China of aiding the Afghan insurgents. But since the accession of the new Soviet party chief Gorbachev in March, the Chinese have held down the number of high-level commentaries on Afghanistan, and the Soviet Union has downplayed its criticism of China. The Chinese press, however, continues to produce a steady stream of low-level articles on Afghanistan that mention brutality by Soviet troops. [REDACTED]

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Beijing, meanwhile, continues to refuse to have any official contact with Kabul lest it lend some legitimacy to the Kabul regime and the Soviet military presence in Afghanistan. According to the Chinese MFA First Secretary, the Chinese rebuffed two recent attempts by Kabul to establish contact. On 17 January the Chinese charge in Kabul refused to accept a letter from the Afghan ruling party to the Chinese Communist Party. Similarly, the Chinese rejected a note from the Afghan Foreign Ministry on 31 January protesting Chinese aid to the insurgents. We believe the Chinese may have feared that the Soviets and their Afghan allies would misrepresent such contacts as a softening of China's support for the insurgents and Pakistan.

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Outlook

The Chinese are likely to continue to temper their press commentary on Afghanistan, at least as long as they are still hopeful of improving relations with Moscow, while maintaining their backing for the Afghan insurgents and Pakistan. The Chinese will use aid to the insurgents to reassure Pakistan as well as the United States that their overtures to Moscow do not foreshadow any dramatic reversal of China's geostrategic alignment with the West. Pakistani cooperation is crucial to sustaining the insurgency, which serves Chinese interest in keeping the Soviets bogged down and reminding the world of Soviet aggression. Moreover, Chinese leaders still regard Pakistan both as an important buffer against Soviet expansion southward and as a counterweight to India on the subcontinent.

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